



City of Santa Barbara

TEA FIRE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Debris Removal & Erosion Control

Is it necessary to obtain a permit to clear my property of debris from the fire? Yes. An “over-the-counter” Demolition/Debris Removal permit issued by the Building and Safety Division is required. You will need to come in to 630 Garden St and provide a simple plot plan of your property showing the location of all affected structures, the extent of damage, and select one of the City’s pre-approved waste haulers. See the “Debris Removal” handout on our website at www.SantaBarbaraCa.gov/BuildingForms. Before clearing debris, it is recommended that your insurance agent visit the site, inspect the damage, and take photos.

Will the City perform area-wide erosion control or am I responsible for erosion control on my property? Private property owners are responsible for maintaining their property in a safe manner that does not cause harm to other properties. This includes erosion control. Each property owner should install proper and sufficient erosion control measures to ensure this. Please see our erosion control handout on our website at www.SantaBarbaraCa.gov/BuildingForms for more information.

Rebuilding

My home was destroyed in the Tea Fire and I want to re-build. Where do I start? If you haven’t already, contact your insurance agent as soon as possible. Make sure your insurance adjuster has been to the site before you do any clearing. Contact the State of California Department of Insurance at 1-800-927-4357 or check their website at www.insurance.ca.gov for additional tips on dealing with your insurance agent.

Who do I contact to find out what I can or can’t rebuild? Does the City have a copy of the original plans for my structure? Yes. The City will most likely have original house plans. Planning Staff have been assigned to help guide you through the permit process in rebuilding your home. Your planner will have information on your parcel history, your permit history, and archived plans (if available) for your property. The City Planning Division is offering homeowners the ability to meet with a case planner by appointment.

Making Changes

Do I have to rebuild my home exactly how it was before or can I make changes to my former house design? The City encourages homeowners to consider making improvements on the original design of the home, particularly in regard to fire prevention, energy efficiency and sustainability issues. Reconstruction of damaged nonconforming structures are allowed to be restored or rebuilt under certain conditions outlined in SBMC 28.87.038. You may be eligible should you want to rebuild your home in generally the same location with a similar size and footprint as before. It may be a longer process should you choose to substantially alter the design, but the City is currently looking at ways to expedite this process as well. Contact assigned case planners for additional information on these matters.

Can I rebuild what I had and obtain a quick building permit issuance? In most cases, homes destroyed will require compliance with new building construction codes and water quality requirements, which will necessitate plan changes. The City has adopted a Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance (NPO) and Storm Water Management Program (SWMP) that may require compliance with specific design guidelines for properties located in the Hillside Design District. Planning recommends homeowners first meet with a case planner for an initial evaluation to determine if your project is exempt or what level of architectural design review is required for your rebuild project. In some cases, where minor changes are proposed, staff administrative approvals can be obtained and the building permit can be issued more quickly. However, based on the extent of design changes, a higher level of architectural design review may be warranted. The City is setting up an expedited review process involving the use of the Single Family Design Board (SFDB) Consent Calendar. Once you have met with an assigned case planner and you understand the City’s review process, you should have better idea on how best to proceed with your rebuilding plans.

I'm concerned about how long this is all going to take. Can the City do anything to speed up the process? The City is aware of homeowner's concerns regarding possible delays involving rebuilding. There is a concerted effort being made by Staff and the SFDB members to review applications as quickly as possible to allow for a quicker review process. The SFDB Consent Calendar hours are also being extended to provide special review slots for Tea Fire Rebuild Projects. In addition, an early consultation concept review process will allow homeowners to take advantage of free design expertise from local design professionals who have volunteered to assist. Once submitted for a building permit, all Tea Fire affected plans will be given priority in an effort to expedite the permit review process.

Accessory Structures

I had several accessory structures that were destroyed on my property in addition to the house? Will I be able to replace these? Consult with your assigned case planner with regard to replacement of accessory structures. These will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Structures that meet current zoning regulations will generally be allowed to be rebuilt.

Architectural Plans

My house was very old and I don't know if architectural plans exist for it. I'm not even sure exactly how large it was in terms of area. How do I obtain this information? If architectural plans exist, the City Building and Safety Division Records and Archives staff can provide you information relative to building permit records and archived architectural plans. The plans are located in the Community Development Department building at 630 Garden Street. The Recorder and Assessor's Office has information on your tax history which your assigned case planner can use to help determine what was on your property prior to the fire. Property owners may visit the Recorder and Assessor's Office and access the "Residential Building Record". If you would like an agent to access the record for you instead, you will need to sign a form allowing the release of this information. Contact the Tax Assessor's office for a copy of this form.

I have a set of plans from a few years ago when we remodeled our house. Will I be able to use these or have building codes changed since then? Previously drawn plans may be useful to determine your options, but only plans that were approved under the 2001 or 2007 California Building Codes may be submitted "as is" with only minor changes. Homes approved under codes previous to these must be rebuilt to comply with the currently adopted, 2007 California Building Code. All plans will need to meet the current requirements for High Fire Area Construction (CBC Chapter 7A) and the Undergrounding of Utilities Ordinance (SBMC 22.38).

Architects and Designers

Can I have my architect or designer act on my behalf during this process? Yes. For most tasks, an architect or designer can act on your behalf if you file an Agent Authorization Form. Ask your planner for an Agent Authorization Form. Just fill this form out, sign it, and return it to your case planner, and your case planner will honor the request. However, to request copies of your archived architectural plans, authorization of the owner is required in person or via certified mail. Agent Authorization Forms are not accepted.

I don't really know any architects, designers or contractors. Can you recommend anyone? As a public agency, we are restricted from making these types of recommendations. Two excellent sources for help on finding the right kind of help are your local chapters of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Santa Barbara Contractors Association (SBCA). You can contact the AIA by visiting their office at 229 East Victoria Street, by calling (805) 966-4198, or by navigating to their website at www.aiasb.com. You can contact the SBCA by mail at P.O. Box 23409, by calling (805) 884-1100, or by navigating to their website at www.sbcontractors.org.

Temporary Trailer

Can I live on my property while I rebuild? Do I need a permit for that? Yes to both questions. Council introduced an Ordinance on Dec 9, 2008 that allows fire victims to temporarily live on the property with a recreational vehicle or a mobile home as long as it is self-contained (contains facilities for living, cooking, sleeping, and sanitation). A debris/demolition clearing permit must first be issued. You may obtain a temporary trailer permit for this and for a temporary power pole at the Building and Safety Division's "building counter" (see address below). Once you are ready, you can call the Building and Safety Division and a building inspector will come out and verify that you are safely situated and verify that your power can be safely hooked up.

Do I have to be hooked up to my septic system or the public sanitary sewer? Are holding tanks allowed?

Any of these systems of sewage disposal is acceptable. To hook up to an existing septic system, the lines and tank must be emptied and a damage inspection report prepared. A copy of this inspection report and any recommendations must be submitted to the Building and Safety Counter at time of application for the temporary trailer permit. If your trailer has an internal holding tank, you must have a signed contract with a sewage removal service (minimum six month contract). You will need to present a copy of the signed contract at the Building and Safety Counter to have your temporary trailer permit issued. All sewer laterals for properties with destroyed homes are being cut and capped near the property line by City workers. Visit the Public Works Counter regarding reconnecting to the sewer main in compliance with the City's Sewer Lateral Inspection Program (SLIP). The SLIP requires sewer laterals be inspected prior to reconnection to the main. If a lateral is found to be in need of repair, then per the SLIP and Santa Barbara Municipal Code 14.48, lateral repair must be completed prior to reconnection to the main sewer. There won't be an additional tap fee if the existing wye is re-used.

How long may I live on the property in my temporary trailer? Temporary trailer permits will be issued for a two-year period. A debris/demolition clearing permit must first be issued. An application for a reconstruction of the residences must be submitted within six months from the date of temporary trailer permit. Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis by the Building and Safety Division if deemed necessary.

Taxes

What do I do if I have lost my tax records? If you have lost your tax records, you should contact the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for replacements. You can call the local Santa Barbara IRS office at (805) 564-7518 or visit their website at www.irs.gov. The local Santa Barbara IRS office is located at 1332 Anacapa Street, Suite 101. To reach the State of California Franchise Tax Board, you may call 1-800-852-5711 or visit the Franchise Tax Board website at www.ftb.ca.gov.

Do my property taxes automatically get reassessed to adjust them for my loss of improvements? Will they be reassessed at market value once I've completed the re-build? Most Tea Fire victims will receive an improvement only refund warrant for the period of 11/1/08 - 6/30/09. The 2008-09 tax statement will not change. Many have opted for a December 10, 2008 tax deadline extension. The refunds most receive will primarily be for improvement damage. The refund will be sent whether or not they've paid their taxes yet. The property owner will be given a 30 day extension from the date the refund is received to pay their 12/10/08 installment. The refunds should start to go out in late January, with most being mailed in February 2009.

The Assessor will review both the improvement and land values of the ten parcels that cannot rebuild. Both the 2008-09 and future assessments for these parcels will be reduced, and the percentage of adjustment will likely be larger as they cannot rebuild. The 2008-09 tax bills for the ten parcels that cannot rebuild will likely be adjusted downward, and the owners will be given 30 days to pay the corrected installment amounts without late penalty.

You must complete an application form and turn it in at the tax assessor's office to have your property reassessed at a lower value during your re-build (see address below). You can also apply at that time to have your upcoming property tax payment deferred to a later date.

Other Documents

I lost my birth certificate in the fire. How do I get it replaced? You may visit the County Clerk, Recorder, and Assessor's office for help if you have lost vital and official documents such as certificates of birth, death, fetal death, or marriage, as well as deeds required to obtain assistance from federal, state and local governmental agencies, make claims for and collect insurance, or find new employment. The address is listed below.

A vehicle of mine was destroyed in the fire and I also lost my driver's license. What should I do? If your car has been destroyed, contact your insurance company. If you lost your driver license or identification card, contact the State of California Department of Motor Vehicles at a DMV field office, on-line at www.dmv.ca.gov, or call 1-800-777-0133.

Where Do I Go for Assistance?

City

Building and Safety Division – Building Counter

630 Garden Street (first floor)
 Santa Barbara, CA 93101
 City website: www.SantaBarbaraCA.org
 General Information Line: (805) 564-5485
 Contacts: Chris Hansen
 Larry Cassidy
 George Estrella

- Demolition/Debris Removal Permits
- List of pre-approved haulers
- Temporary on-site housing building permits
- Temporary power permits
- septic systems
- leach fields

Planning Division – Planning and Zoning Counter

630 Garden Street (first floor)
 Santa Barbara, CA 93101
 City website: www.SantaBarbaraCA.org
 General Information Line: (805) 564-5470
 Contacts: Brenda Beltz
 Tony Boughman
 JoAnne La Conte
 Roxanne Milazzo

- Case Planner Information
- Land Use Permits
- Questions regarding what you can rebuild
- Temporary on-site housing land use permits

Public Works Department – Public Works Counter

630 Garden Street (first floor)
 Santa Barbara, CA 93101
 City website: www.SantaBarbaraCA.org
 (805) 564-5388
 Contact: Victoria Johnson

- General permitting
- Solid waste permits
- Sewer lateral inspections, hook-up and water meter information
- Water wells
- Permits for work in watercourses and creeks
- Temporary use of City Streets /parking permits

Fire Department

121 W. Carrillo Street
 Santa Barbara, CA 93101
 City website: www.SantaBarbaraCA.org
 (805) 965-5254
 Contacts: Jim Austin
 Joe Poire

- Fire Damage Questions
- High Fire Hazard Area Code Requirements
- Driveway Access information
- Chipping services are available, contact Amber Anderson

County

County Clerk, Recorder and Assessor's Office

105 East Anapamu Street, Room 204
 Santa Barbara, CA 93101
 County website: www.countyofsb.org
 General Information Line: (805) 568-2550

- Tax reassessment
- Marriage, birth, and death certificates
- Deed replacement

State

State of California Department of Insurance

website: www.insurance.ca.gov
 1-800-927-4357

- Questions regarding insurance claims

State of California Department of Motor Vehicles

535 Castillo Street
 Santa Barbara, CA 93101
 DMV website: www.dmv.ca.gov
 1-800-777-0133

- Driver's license replacement

State of California Franchise Tax Board

Franchise Tax Board website: www.ftb.ca.gov
 1-800-852-5711

- State tax record replacement
- Tax treatment of lost property

Federal

Federal Emergency Management Agency

County Administration Building
 105 East Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara, CA
 FEMA website: www.fema.gov
 1-800-621-3362 (FEMA)

- disaster assistance
- loans

Internal Revenue Service

1332 Anacapa Street, Suite 101
 Santa Barbara, CA 93101
 Local Office Phone Number: (805) 564-7518
 IRS website: www.irs.gov

- Federal tax record replacement
- Tax treatment of lost property

City Permit Records

Building and Safety Division – Records Counter

630 Garden Street (first floor)
 General Information Line: (805) 564-5485
 Contact Brenda Nielsen